

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 AID-05 PC-01 CPR-01 OMB-01 SCS-03

SCA-01 /063 W

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O R 211135Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0056

USIA WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, PROP, CASC

SUBJ: DEPORTATION OF JOURNALISTS

REF: NEW DELHI 9727

1. GROUP OF 20 WESTERN JOURNALISTS CALLED ON MININFO AND BROADCASTING V.C. SHUKLA AT HIS HOME EARLY MORNING JULY 21 TO URGE CHANGE IN INDIAN CENSORSHIP PROCEDURES, AND SPECIFICALLY END TO PRE-CENSORSHIP. TO NEWSMEN'S SURPRISE, SHUKLA AGREED TO TAKE SUCH A CHANGE UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. AT SUBSEQUENT WORKING LEVEL MEETING BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND OFFICIALS OF MINISTRY AT NOON TO THRASH OUT NEW GUIDELINES, INDIAN POSITION HARDENED SOMEWHAT WITH SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT INSISTING THAT REPORTING ON PARLIAMENT AND MRS GANDHI'S TRIAL MUST STILL BE LIABLE TO PRE-CENSORSHIP ALTHOUGH ALL OTHER STORIES COULD PASS WITHOUT CENSORSHIP WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOI HOLDING CORRESPONDENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR PIECES WHICH

WERE OFFENSIVE. PRESS ARE HOLDING OUT FOR FULL ELIMINATION OF PRE-CENSORSHIP BUT MOST ARE PLEASED AT WHAT THEY SEE AS MAJOR GOI RETREAT FROM EXTREMELY HARD POSITION WHICH CULMINATED IN EXPULSION NOTICES ISSUED JULY 20 (REFTEL).

2. NEWSWEEK'S LOREN JENKINS IS UNDER EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS HEAD OFFICE NOT TO AGREE TO ANY PRE-CENSORSHIP WHATSOEVER AND HAZELHURST (LONDON TIMES) IS OPERATING UNDER SIMILAR INSTRUCTION. PETER GILL (DAILY TELEGRAPH) WILL ASK HIS PAPER TO RELAX ITS INSTRUCTIONS IF HE FEELS HE CAN FILE MOST, EVEN IF NOT ALL, STORIES WITHOUT PRIOR RESTRAINT. ALL THREE NEWSMEN, AND REMAINDER OF CORRESPONDENTS, BELIEVE EVEN IF PARTIAL RESTRICTIONS ARE MAINTAINED, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO OPERATE MUCH MORE EASILY AND EFFECTIVELY THAN BEFORE IF GOI FOLLOWS THROUGH ON CHANGING CENSORSHIP RULES EVEN ALONG PARTIAL LINES DISCUSSED AT NOON MEETING TODAY. NEXT SESSION OF NEGOTIATIONS SCHEDULED FOR 1600 TODAY.

3. JENKINS AND OTHER TWO CORRESPONDENTS ARE STILL PREPARING TO LEAVE EARLY MORNING JULY 22 IF SATISFACTORY SOLUTION NOT REACHED AND THEIR DEPORTATION ORDERS ARE NOT WITHDRAWN.

4. IN VIEW OF SHIFTING SANDS OF CURRENT GOI POSITION, RECOMMEND THAT DEPT DELAY ANY REPRESENTATIONS TO INDIAN EMBASSY FOR TIME BEING. NEWSMEN, OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, AND WE ARE UNABLE TO EXPLAIN APPARENTLY SWIFTLY CHANGING GOI POSITION ON THIS WHOLE ISSUE. IN UNDATED BUT OBVIOUSLY RECENT INTERVIEW WITH MEXICAN WEEKLY, SIEMPRE, MRS GGANDHI SAID THAT PRESS CENSORSHIP HAD TO BE IMPOSED TO PREVENT INCITEMENT TO DISOBEY THE LAWS. SHE CLAIMED THAT ONE OF THE REASONS THE SITUATION WAS UNDER CONTROL WAS THE FACT THAT THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES WERE DENIED THE APPARATUS OF PROVOCATION, I.E., THE PRESS. WHILE IF MRS GANDHI HAD BEEN ASKED TO EXPAND HER REMARKS, SHE MIGHT HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENTIONED THE NEED FOR PRESS CENSORSHIP IN TERMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, WE THINK IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE ONLY REASON SHE OFFERED DEALT WITH THE NEED TO CONTROL NEWS DISSEMINATION WITHIN INDIA. CONCEIVABLY, SHUKLA AND MRS GANDHI HERSELF MAY BE THINKING GENUINELY ABOUT RATIONALE FOR CENSORING FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOI MAY REVERSE ITSELF AGAIN AND CLAMP D

WN HARD.
SAXBE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENSORSHIP, EXPULSION, JOURNALISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NEWDE09752
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750251-0202
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750737/aaaabgzj.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 NEW DELHI 9727
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <05 NOV 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPORTATION OF JOURNALISTS
TAGS: PFOR, PROP, CASC
To: STATE USIA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006